



COMMENTARY



Environmental Pollution: A Growing Threat to Public Health

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Description

Environmental pollution is one of the most significant challenges that humanity is facing in the 21st century. The rapid industrialization and urbanization have contributed to the degradation of the natural environment, resulting in severe health consequences for humans. The impact of environmental pollution on public health is undeniable, as it leads to various diseases, disabilities, and even premature deaths.

Air pollution, for instance, is a major environmental health hazard that affects people worldwide. The toxic pollutants emitted by vehicles, factories, and power plants, such as carbon monoxide, lead, and nitrogen dioxide, and sulphur dioxide, can cause respiratory problems, including asthma, bronchitis, and lung cancer. Additionally, air pollution is linked to heart disease, stroke, and cognitive decline, which can have significant social and economic implications.

Water pollution is another critical environmental issue that poses a severe threat to public health. The contamination of drinking water sources by chemicals, pesticides, and heavy metals can cause various health problems, including diarrhoea, typhoid, and cholera. Moreover, exposure to contaminated water over a prolonged period can lead to chronic diseases such as cancer, reproductive disorders, and developmental abnormalities.

Soil pollution, which is often overlooked, can also have significant health implications. Soil pollution occurs when hazardous chemicals, such as pesticides, industrial waste, and sewage, are released into the soil. The toxic contaminants can enter the food chain through crops, livestock, and fish, posing a significant risk to human health. Prolonged exposure to contaminated soil can cause various illnesses, including cancer, neurological disorders, and birth defects.

Impact of air pollution on human health

Air pollution has become a major environmental health concern globally, with its negative effects on human health well documented. The World Health Organization (WHO)

estimates that air pollution causes seven million premature deaths worldwide each year, with low- and middle-income countries being the hardest hit.

Air pollution comprises of both outdoor and indoor pollutants, including fine particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, ozone, and carbon monoxide. These pollutants have been linked to a wide range of health problems, including respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and adverse pregnancy outcomes.

Exposure to air pollution can lead to chronic conditions such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which affect the respiratory system. Studies have also shown that air pollution can exacerbate existing heart conditions, leading to increased risk of heart attacks and strokes.

The impact of air pollution on children's health is particularly concerning, with children being more susceptible to respiratory illnesses and cognitive impairment. Exposure to air pollution during pregnancy has also been linked to low birth weight and premature birth, which can have lifelong consequences for a child's health and development.

Reducing air pollution requires concerted efforts from governments, industries, and individuals. Policies that promote the use of clean energy sources, such as wind and solar power, can help reduce outdoor pollution. Indoor air pollution can be minimized by improving ventilation and using clean cooking fuels. Individuals can also take steps to reduce their exposure to air pollution, such as using public transportation, walking or cycling instead of driving, and avoiding outdoor activities during peak pollution times.

In conclusion, environmental pollution is a significant public health concern that requires urgent attention from governments, industries, and individuals. The adverse health effects of pollution can affect people of all ages, especially the most vulnerable populations, such as children, the elderly, and people with pre-existing health conditions. Therefore, there is a need to take immediate action to reduce pollution levels and protect the health of current and

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future generations. Adopting sustainable practices, investing in clean energy, and enforcing strict environmental regulations are some of the ways which can mitigate the negative impact of pollution on public health. And air pollution is a significant environmental health problem that requires ur-

gent attention. The negative impacts on human health are clear, and reducing air pollution must be a priority for policymakers, industries, and individuals alike. By taking concerted efforts to reduce air pollution, the health and wellbeing of people around the world can be improved.